











THE  
BLACK PAMPHLET OF CALCUTTA.

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THE FAMINE OF 1874.

BY  
A BENGAL CIVILIAN.

(ENGLISH EDITION)

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'Close ambition varnished o'er with zeal.'  
*Paradise Lost.*

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LONDON:  
WILLIAM RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY, W.  
1876.

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## REFATORY LETTER

TO

HENRY FAWCETT, ESQ., M.P.

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SIR,

Your efforts in Parliament, and out of it, to create an intelligent interest in the administration of our Indian Empire are not the less praiseworthy because they have been so partially successful. It was "a far cry to Loch Awe," and it is a farther one to Calcutta. There can be no other reason why the blundering sentence of a clerical magistrate in Hants or Herts becomes a nine days' topic, while the incapacity which affects the prosperity of a dependency peopled by hundreds of millions may obtain the prominence of an occasional note in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Our Native Army in India was the theme of complacent reflections up to the outbreak of the mutiny. Our Civil and Financial Administration of India is still in the enjoyment, in non-Indian circles at least, of a similar reputation, with this

difference, however, that in its case an economic catastrophe, a culmination of unthrift and unreason, has already taken place, has been recognised for what it is by the best portion of the Indian official and non-official public, and continues, nevertheless, to pass current among the extatic common places of a popular school of British journalism and a traditional school of Anglo-Indian "statesmanship" as the greatest achievement of Imperial prescience, prudence and benevolence which history records.

In taking the liberty of dedicating to you the following pages, being the English edition of a recent Calcutta pamphlet, which—so intense is the feeling on its subject—within a few days had sold by thousands of copies, I am actuated by the confident hope that you will not permit its grave and weighty statements to pass without a serious examination, the more searching the better. If the statements of the author are even approximately accurate—and they are all founded on the Bengal Secretariat Reports—it will be impossible any longer for an Obstructive Party to allege their usual pretexts for withholding the more than unsatisfactory condition of Indian affairs from the educated judgment of the country.

In 1866 there was a horrible Famine in Bengal, and a few thousand pounds were expended,

dilatorily and ineffectually, by an ignorant and improvident Administration. In 1874 there was a partial failure of a crop—Rice—which never at any moment enters, except as a comparative luxury, into the ordinary consumption of the population, and a Famine Panic fell upon the Government, which could only be allayed by converting enormous regions into the scene of “a vast picnic”—to use the calmly scornful expression of the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, Sir John Strachey—and which within the space of a few months caused an expenditure of nearly Ten millions sterling ! It is true that, in one sense, the Treasury did not lose all the money, since the revenue returns show that the consumption of excisable beverages by the “distressed” merry-makers exhibited, naturally enough, a significant increase over non-Famine seasons !

“ There has been a failure of the Rice crop in “ Bengal.” This was the first note of the coming Panic in 1873. “ There has been a failure of “ the Food of Bengal,” was the second. On this assumption the Indian Government acted, fully backed up by the Home Authorities, who never had a doubt but that Rice, and perhaps Curry, constituted the staple diet of the East. The fact was that Rice was not, never has been, and never will be “ the Food of Bengal.” All the high-sown com-

parisons with the failure of the potatoe in Ireland were so much irrelevant nonsense. The Bengalese eat Rice indeed, but—notably in inland Bengal—wheat, barley, peas, murwa, and a dozen other food-grains supply the staple diet of the people, and with reason, for they are always far cheaper than Rice, as well as better suited for the support of a labouring population. It was their failure which caused the climax of Famine in 1866. As they did not fail, and were not even alleged to have failed, there was only *a mock Famine* in 1874.

The knowledge of Anglo-Indian officials, Sir, has often been accused of seldom penetrating below the surface of Indian society. Their superficiality becomes somewhat embarrassing when it leads them to waste millions sterling on the supposition that an apprehended scarcity of Rice was tantamount to a total failure of the indispensable “Food of Bengal.”

What should be said of such reasoning as follows with regard to Home affairs: “There will be a scarcity of Turnips in England this year.”—“Turnips being the Food of England, our people stand on the very verge of an appalling Famine”!!! Conclusion: “Let so-and-so many millions sterling be at once expended in purchasing Turnips throughout the world, and bringing the Food of England to every mansion

“and every cottage of this English land. Authority is a sacred trust. The Life of the nation is the first of obligations. Humanity transcends all other considerations. Let turnips, therefore, &c. &c. &c.” !!!!! This is, indeed, parody, but neither inapt nor excessively exaggerated.

The Bengal Civilian who, “Famine” maps and “Famine” Blue-books in hand, and making allowance for every item of legitimate expenditure, has collected the astonishing data which follow, has estimated the waste of the “Famine” expenditure under three main heads, thus:

Waste in Rice allotments . . .	£4,271,750
„ Relief works . . .	1,173,250
„ Transport . . .	2,486,350

And his demand is—a Parliamentary Commission on the subject.

“Indian famines,” he says with truth, “have been a continual cause of disgrace to successive administrations in this country. When they were only too real they were neglected, and when they did not and could not exist they were evolved from their own nothingness. It is certain that in both cases the Supreme and the Bengal Governments have been equally concerned, and we fear we cannot trust either of them to do much towards elucidating the topics involved. At the same time it is clear that no Indian tribunal can sit in judgment on them,

“ and if any impartial Court of sufficient dignity  
 “ is to be constituted, we must go to England  
 “ for it.”

To me, Sir, and I think to many, it seems that the suggested remedy does not at any rate go beyond the necessities of the case.

If such a Parliamentary Commission be issued, not scores merely but hundreds of the most experienced Indian civilians, military men, merchants, journalists, employés, and onlookers of every description, will be found to unite their testimony in reprobation of the demoralizing comedy on which the resources of the Empire have been squandered. On the other hand, without the mandate and protection of Parliament, there can be neither courage to confess nor indeed an object in confessing. “ Uncontrolled by Indian opinion, unobserved by English opinion,” the mechanical bureaucracy we have let develop without any of the checks a bureaucracy requires, is always at the disposal, or rather at the mercy, of the conceit or the ignorance of the official group or individual that from Calcutta or Simla turns the cranks and handles of central and irresistible authority.

I have the honour to remain, .

Your obedient Servant,

THE LONDON EDITOR.

# THE FAMINE OF 1874.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

In saying that the Famine of 1874 has been the most important event in Indian domestic history since the Mutiny we may seem to some, indeed to many, to exaggerate. It is true it involved but little statecraft, and no vital danger to the Empire, but it was, as its panegyrists tell us, a great campaign, victory in which was more glorious than the conquest of kingdoms and the annexing of provinces. These writers doubtless considered that conquest and annexation form the acme of political success, and that a period in which they predominate is one of the greatest importance. It is unquestionable that since the Mutiny our rulers have indulged us with neither of these achievements. Our statement, we believe, logically follows. We shall have in the course of these pages to enunciate much with which the minute writers and inspired correspondents will not agree, so that we may well yield this much at the outset to these gentlemen. Our readers will therefore bear with



us when we repeat that the Bengal famine has been the most important event in Indian domestic history since the Mutiny; and if at the end it seems that we do not use these words quite in the sense that the minute writers and inspired correspondents might wish, they may come to agree with us that the circumstances we treat of are of the very first importance, if only for the single fact that they never should have occurred.

In the following pages we undertake to prove many points; and as mathematical proof is generally considered to be the most satisfactory, we venture to follow no less an example than that of Euclid in the system of our work. We will clearly state what we declare to be true, and which is to be proved, and then prove it, using, as far as possible, figures as our means of demonstration.

There have been three famines, or so-called famines, in the Lower Provinces within the memory of their English rulers, in 1770, 1866, and 1874. Of the first we know nothing more than what may be derived from Dr. Hunter's description in his *Rural Bengal*. The passage is well-known, and cannot be said to be very definite or very valuable except for a certain literary brilliancy. Regarding the calamity of 1866 we are really well-informed, how well will afterwards appear, and—what is mainly important—all the information concerning that year is of high statistical value, affording ample grounds on which to base

estimates of relief in cases of distress at any subsequent time.

As to the so-called famine of 1874, we declare it was *an impossibility from the beginning*. It was said to arise from drought, but there was no such drought as in 1865. In fact *there was as much rain in 1873 as in at least a dozen years during the twenty from 1855 to 1875*. Let us take a single district as an instance, one marked by both Sir George Campbell and Sir Richard Temple as a famine tract. We will give many more further on, but only one at present. There is a single first-class meteorological station in Behar. It is situated at Monghyr. For many years, even before the time of the Orissa famine, a special establishment has been employed to register its rainfall. Its returns therefore may be taken as more correct than those of ordinary districts, where the civil surgeon and his clerk keep rainfall registers, and not always very carefully. Getting only thirty rupees a month for doing so—a pittance, which, we lately heard, is to be withdrawn—they have not had much reason to think very highly of the importance of this part of their duties. In the sixteen years from 1860 to 1875, the total rainfall of each year has been:—in 1860, 27 inches; in 1861, 60 inches; in 1862, 40 inches; in 1863, 41 inches; in 1864, 42 inches; in 1865, 37 inches; in 1866, 45 inches; in 1867, 43 inches; in 1868, 32 inches; in 1869, 37 inches; in 1870,

71 inches; in 1871, 58 inches; in 1872, 41 inches; *in* 1873, 42 *inches*; in 1874, 60 inches; in 1875, 46 inches.

Need we comment on these returns? The total rainfall of 1873 was greater than that of 1860, of 1862, of 1863, of 1865, of 1866, of 1868, of 1869, and of 1872: and equal or nearly equal to that of 1861, of 1864, of 1870, and of 1871; and only five inches short of the average fall of the sixteen years, which was 47 inches. But we shall be told that the late rice crop depends on rain in the later rainy months of August, September, and October. We are willing to consider the position of things in 1873 as tested by the rainfall of these months. The average fall of the sixteen years from 1860 to 1875 during August, September, and October, was 27 inches. During the same months of 1860 it was 13 inches; of 1864, 12 inches; of 1865,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  *inches*; of 1867, 17 inches; of 1868, 16 inches; of 1869, 15 inches; of 1873—*the Year of the Drought!!!*—19 *inches*. We are really afraid the public will not believe our figures; yet we hereby challenge Sir Richard Temple to produce authentic ones differing one half-inch from them. Excepting years of excessive rainfall, 1861 and 1874 with 60 inches and 1870 with 71, we declare the rainfall of 1873, both in its total amount and in the quantity which fell in the important months of August, September, and October, *a good average rainfall*.

Our readers doubtless know what is meant by the Nepaul Terai. It is a narrow belt of forest that runs along the foot of the Himalaya from Oude to Assam. Immediately south of this belt there is a strip of low land from twenty to thirty miles wide, extending through the whole north from east to west of the districts of Bhaugulpore, Tirhoot, and Chumparun in the Bengal Provinces, and Gorukhpore and Bustee in the North-Western Provinces. All these tracts produce rice in considerable quantities, and are besides in most respects of climate, soil, products and population very much alike. Poor and aboriginal or semi-aboriginal tribes, such as Dosadhs, Mushars, and Tharoos, prevail. The rainfall in all was, we admit, somewhat deficient in 1873. In North Bhaugulpore, with a normal rainfall of 49 inches, it was 31 inches in 1873. In North Tirhoot, with a normal rainfall of 44 inches, it was 33 inches in 1873. In North Chumparun, with a normal rainfall of 46 inches, it was 36 inches in 1873. In Bustee, with a normal rainfall of 53 inches, it was 23·7 inches in 1873. That is, *the deficiency of the rainfall in the North-West Provinces was very much greater than in the worst parts of Behar, in Bustee three times as great as in Chumparun*, where we are to believe the very agony of famine was barely averted by the most lavish relief. If any one wishes to verify our figures we can refer him to the supplements of the *Calcutta Gazette*, and to

p. 141 of the second volume of "Papers relating to the famine in Bengal and Behar, 1873-74," published at the Bengal Secretariat in the present year.

Let us pause a moment here. We feel we have outrun our original promise by going into arguments before we have stated the whole of our propositions, although it is perhaps as well to let our readers learn, even thus early, a little of the truth that is coming.

We also wish to make a statement. We shall have, we ourselves confess, to be severe in our references to Sir Richard Temple, though, after all, the whole Indian system must often divide the blame with him. We regret having to be severe. We shall, as far as possible, stay our hand. We can almost say we do not like the work we are engaged on, except in so far as there is a kind of melancholy satisfaction in unveiling and bringing to light the shams and errors whose showy exterior had once blinded us to their deceitfulness. The proving of the truth of the sad old story that all is not gold that glitters has no special pleasure for us.

This is no political squib. We write in thorough earnest. If we had any political end in view, the Viceroy, who represents a party, would form the most natural object of attack. But we do not do so. We do not hold Lord Northbrook responsible for the conduct of the late famine. We are quite conscious of the many errors he made, but we refuse to hold

him guilty for them. Invincible ignorance, even in the strictest of churches, is sufficient to win pardon for the gravest of errors. Lord Northbrook, like all other Indian Viceroys, has done his work. Perhaps under all the circumstances he could not have done it better. Pitchforked—as Indian Viceroys are apt to be pitchforked—into the midst of such a government, how was he to act? His mistakes were entirely due to ignorance and incompetent counsel, and Sir Richard Temple was the adviser officially deputed to report on the expected “Famine” at the opening of 1874, and who, a couple of months later, succeeded Sir George Campbell in the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal. Turn as you will, you always find yourselves confronted by him or something emanating from him. When he did not advise he ordered. Whatever Sir George Campbell did is lost sight of in the vastness of Sir Richard Temple’s measures.

As we said before, we criticize, and usually condemn, Sir Richard Temple with regret. We are not unaware of the services he has rendered in many positions. Neither are we unaware of the trials and temptations to which the system of Personal Government subjects its representatives, and India is such a system of Personal Government as the world has rarely seen, uncontrolled by Indian opinion, unobserved by English opinion, practically responsible for nothing and to nobody, except when something has been done that can

never be undone, with every incentive to adulation, with little thanks for honest independence. But we originate no new charges against the Lieutenant-Governor or the system of which he was the centre. We only repeat what has been a hundred times urged against him and it in almost every journal, and by every disinterested and intelligent man in the country. The charges are indeed cruelly explicit. They are, shortly, that with an unrivalled ignorance of everything concerning Bengal and Behar, estimates of relief for the supposed famine were made, so extravagant, so unreasonable, that they were stigmatized by even such an alarmist as Sir George Campbell as excessive; that the famine narratives given to the public were an utterly misleading statement of the facts; that the famine was nursed and bolstered up in the face of the advice of the most experienced officers in Behar; that in their own districts men were superseded and insulted who refused to shriek Famine with the same lustiness as the small and very junior following of the "Satellites;" that provident officials were forced to give rates of wages, in some cases ten times as great as the ordinary wages of the country; that transport contracts were made at eight times the ordinary rates; that money was wasted and lavished and poured out like water; *that of the nine and a half millions of pounds sterling spent on famine relief, eight and a half millions were wasted — absolutely*

*and utterly wasted*, and last of all, that each and every one who ministered to this ruinous extravagance was besmeared with the most unabashed and intemperate laudation, from the commissioners who passed the estimates to the planters who pocketed the profit.

The main reasons why we have undertaken our task we shall afterwards explain; but not the least amongst our reasons is that we consider it an insult to our intelligence, if not a crime against our citizenship, that this oneness of condemnation which on every side has risen up against the Faminist Panic, should be contemptuously disregarded or audaciously shelved. We also have some hopes that we may awake present and succeeding Viceroy to an abiding conception of the enormity of the errors that have been committed. We may even succeed in rousing Sir Richard Temple to a sense of the gravity of his mismanagement. We try to hope our endeavours may be successful, but there are times when we are hopeless.

Let us give a particular instance of Sir Richard Temple's accuracy. An important point on which this time two years gone, we were all eagerly looking for accurate, for trustworthy information, was the then condition of the rice crop. It was to tell the truth and the whole truth on this subject, that at the end of January, 1874, Lord Northbrook deputed Sir Richard Temple to Behar, and because, as we believe, he implicitly trusted him.



To confound red and green can scarcely be said to be a less extraordinary error than to mistake black for white. The two colours are, indeed, too often supposed to have an inherent, we might say a national disinclination to unite. They are at least distinct in themselves, however happily they might be blended, but Sir Richard Temple has been the first to describe them as the same or interchangeable. In a very remarkable minute, a crowning work of what, we suppose, he would himself call effective writing, Sir Richard Temple has the following passage:—"In North Behar the rice crop is raised in vast hollows or depressions in the surface of a slightly undulating country. From any low eminence the view extends over many square miles of rice harvest; a fine spectacle in ordinary years. But in the autumn of 1873 the crop grew up, then faded, and at last withered. Its colour became brown, deepening by the effect of distance into red. The unnatural aspect of such apparently endless expanses of cultivation, the presage of the coming desolation, produced a striking, almost an appalling effect, on the beholders."

The grass that bears the grain we call rice, has, however, other objects of existence than lending its colour to a picture. Its green and sappy stem forms a large part of the food of the oxen of India. Sir Richard Temple tells us, two pages beyond the last sentences we have quoted, that

during the famine "the appearance of the cattle, both for draught and burden, was in the beginning splendid. For them the drought, which destroyed the ear of the rice plant, had spared the stubble for fodder. The sap and strength of the plant had remained in the stem, so that the stubble fodder was more than ordinarily nourishing!!" Here, forsooth, is a specimen of accuracy, and still more of consistency. We sympathize with Lord Northbrook in many things, but never more than when we contemplate the wholesale disappointment of his touching confidence that almost every detail of the Famine management betrays.

If we seem to any one to use unduly strong language, we answer that the time for honeyed speeches is past, and the time has come for condemnation, unflinching in its severity as certain "resolutions" and addresses of the early months of this year were exceptional in adulation and undeserved praise. We only ask any such critic to reflect on the one fact that out of the nine and a quarter millions spent on the famine, eight and a half were ruthlessly squandered; that is, one-fifth of the revenue of this enormous empire was thrown away with an almost insane carelessness. Since the beginning of the famine alarm we have been close students of its every movement; but even we had no conception of the completeness, of the utterness, of the waste and ignorance involved in the extraordinary event we are chronicling, till we

began to prepare these pages. We attribute no motives, no moral obliquity. Vanity and ignorance and folly, and a great want of the manly pluck that can acknowledge an error, will explain most of the shortcomings we have to notice.

No famine could have resulted from the slight deficiency of rain in 1873. The late rice crop might have been less abundant than in ordinary years, but there was the limit of the mischief. We pray the non-Indian reader to bear this proposition in mind. The autumn crops, including Indian corn, were full. To these succeeded, as we shall afterwards prove, cold weather crops of remarkable fulness. In Gya, "a full crop" and a "full out-turn." In famine-stricken Sarun, the cold weather crops were "very good and excellent." In Patna, "no one, not even the most covetous ryots, could wish for a better crop." In Monghyr, "the ryots even acknowledged them to be everything that could be wished." In Behar, "no one has any reason to complain. Without exception the unanimous testimony of the people is that the rubbee crop is one of the best they have ever seen." In South Tirhoot, it was "a good," and further north an "average crop." In Bhaugulpore, "a bumper crop was almost certain."

What made the foregoing statements the more important, the more deserving of attention, was that almost without exception they came from very senior civilians, the non-competition-wallahs of

Haileybury. Amongst the good things that these gentlemen have secured for themselves are all the best appointments in Behar, which has a much more pleasant and healthy climate than Bengal Proper. They have lived in that province for years, and know it well. In this respect they form a contrast to their younger competition brethren. Indeed, we must say that many of the new civilians do not come at all well out of this famine business. They were pre-eminently the "bears" of the occasion. It is not without some pity we observe this fact. They are mostly rather down in the Indian official world; they are poor, and it is to be feared that when they saw the chance of distinction they rushed very blindly on. It is true there was no incentive to Faminism wanting. Lurid writing was the order of the day, and was not the future Lieutenant-Governor, the disposer of everything worth having for the next five years to come, the most lurid of faminists? It is one of the worst results that we fear from the present slow promotion and low pay to which the young civilians of the Punjab, the North-West Provinces and Bengal have to look forward to, that we may have less steady hard work and more untimely and sensational performances of the expensive kind we are describing.

Our next proposition is, that the autumn and cold weather crops constitute the food of nine-tenths of the people of Behar, rice being a luxury

except in towns, and in a few *very limited* tracts on the borders of Nepaul. The great harvest of the year takes place in March and April, with the gathering of the rubbee crops of wheat, barley, potatoes, and pulses, except in parts of Chumparun, Tirhoot, and North Bhaugulpore; and in these, the absurdly so-called rice tracts of Behar, the two chief crops are maka or Indian corn, and murwa, a grain which has no English name, but is scientifically known as *Eleusine coracana*. This is *one* of the few points in which there must be a certain amount of pity felt for Sir Richard Temple. Knowing as much of Bengal as he could see from the railway as he travelled from Simla to Calcutta, he was little acquainted with the people, and still less with their food. Some hazy ideas about swamps, and rice-fields seemed to have formed his most accurate idea of the province he was quite ready to govern. He was entirely unaware that the Behar peasant was not less fit to subsist on bannocks of barley and potatoes and point than two of the hardiest races in Europe. Was there no one to enlighten him in his pitiable ignorance? Where were the collectors, the well-paid executive officers? We shall never know the cause of their silence, if they were silent, but it is certain that the Collector of Bhaugulpore proclaimed that in the sub-Terai tract the food of the poor *was not rice*, but murwa, and that it had been an average crop in 1873. It is true he did not mention

that there were half-a-dozen other important grains whose uncouth names are never heard in Calcutta, kodo and kauni, shama and kherhi, janeera and late cheena, and that they ripened to perfection in August and September, 1873, thanks to the seasonable rains of those months. But he alone seems to have made some attempt to do his duty in regard to this fundamental question. The result was characteristic of the time and of its men. He was substantially superseded in his own district by an officer of not half his standing, who indented for hundreds of thousands of maunds of rice, with a courageous nonchalance equalled only by his gallant desire to feed the women of the country on claret and Liebig's extract of meat!! We shall devote a chapter to the proof of these facts, and have no fear that we shall fail to convince. *The grains that form the ordinary food of the people of Behar were in 1873-74 average or bumper crops.* For a second reason therefore famine was impossible.

Famine relief in 1874 was more than Protean in its numberless and changing forms. There was charitable relief presenting itself under the guise of every edible and drinkable, from Burmah rice to the treasures of the wine cellar and the delicacies of the grocer's shop. There were relief works also of many kinds, from the digging of tanks to the carding of wool. The former will

afterwards be treated of in full, and it is a subject that we cannot well condense. The latter will also be referred to at considerable length in another page, but we may now give a foretaste of the interesting facts we shall there relate. It has been laid down as the soundest of principles in the conduct of famine relief that "a mere subsistence" allowance should be given, and in return "a full day's labour" should be "insisted on." These axioms were enunciated in the words we quote by Sir John Strachey, and the result of their application was, according to his observations in 1874, that "immense crowds" of so-called relief labourers in the distressed districts of the North-West Provinces "melted away as rapidly as they had collected." We have already seen that there is every reason to believe that the distress in these districts was much greater than in any part of Behar. In May, 1874, there were 87,000 relief labourers in Gorukhpore paid at the *rate of four pice to a man, three to a woman, and two to a child*. In the first week of June they numbered only 25,000, and soon disappeared altogether. In Busti, which had only a little more than a third of its ordinary rainfall, 127,000 people were on relief works in May, paid at the rate of five, four, and two pice for men, women, and children respectively. The rates were reduced to those of Gorukhpore, and on the 22nd of June not a single individual continued on the works. Have we heard of any deaths from starva-

tion, although numbers of officers were specially deputed to search for them?

At the same time what was the state of things in the districts of the Patna Division, which are separated from the North-Western Provinces only by the Gunduck, a river not larger than the Thames at Woolwich, even when in flood, and in the hot weather a fordable stream? In May there were 1,122,828 men, women, and children on relief works. In June they rose to 1,231,496, and by the beginning of July were 1,368,087. The cause of this extraordinary difference in the working of relief was that a man and woman who could not, when labouring at earth-work, obtain more than seven to nine pice in Busti and Gorukhpore, were making from thirty-five to forty-five in Tirhoot and Chumparun !!

This is perhaps the most astonishing fact of this whole famine business and we mean to prove it very fully. As the proof will be derived entirely from official sources which must be quoted and are rather long, we shall devote an entire chapter to the subject of relief works.

These were the earnings of people who were willing to work. There were besides a large number who were quite content to sit and idle, stuff themselves with rice, and assist Sir Richard Temple in working his allotments. They were not however to be bullied. Every consideration was to be extended to such obliging individuals.



In Chumparun the big picnic of Gorukhpore seems to have been excelled. The principal relief officer, Mr. Oldham, reported on the 4th April that "In checking the relief distribution at Koraiya, a frontier village, reported as *the most distressed* in this sub-division, I found some persons who had been relieved, and despatched to the relief works lately opened there, in their houses. They explained to me that *they did not care to work every day*. Again at Kutkenwa, which was also thought to be badly off, on very light task work being introduced on the relief works there, the number of labourers fell one day from over 1,300 to 600." "All the gangs employed on the relief works consist of able-bodied people, all of whom are fit to have task work exacted from them. They still swarm to the works, but show an independence both as regards their choice of sites for working, and when it is attempted to make them give a due return of labour, which is very significant." "On the works under me I have been trying to introduce light task work, that is, to exact at least 1,000 cubic feet from each gang of fifty persons containing not less than fifteen able-bodied men with tools. The result of trying to get only two-thirds of this work from the labourers at Kutkenwa has already been noticed. On introducing it at Sripore, thirteen miles north of Motiharee on the road there, the coolies employed *struck work altogether*." Sir Richard Temple quadrupled relief works in

Chumparun *after* these facts had been reported to him. In Mudhoobunee a similar attempt sent off 150,000, and in Durbhanga 100,000 in a day. The sub-divisional officers shrieked that the rates were "ludicrous," and Sir Richard Temple produced their valuable opinions in a very pathetic minute. Any means were authorized to win back any one who would consent to let his name be put on the relief list, and if he would only put in an appearance occasionally he might sit on the edge of a road, smoke his hubble bubble, and laugh and grow fat. Can we wonder that men who had so much to eat and paid nothing for it should also want to drink, and that a deputy commissioner should have to report that the excise revenue from the sale of liquor showed a "considerable increase" beyond the returns of previous years!

## CHAPTER II.

THE FOOD GRAINS OF BEHAR.—THE SO-CALLED  
RICE TRACTS.—RICE NOT THE FOOD OF THE  
PEOPLE.—OFFICIAL IGNORANCE.

There is a proverb in Behar which it is doubtful if the Faminist party ever heard and certainly never took to heart. It says that where ten crops grow in ten different months, the husbandman need only look to his ploughing. The meaning plainly is, that if he will do his share of the work the cultivator may safely leave the rest to chance. Rain must, sooner or later, come, and if he does not secure one crop he will another, and it is impossible to have all. The lower delta, the districts of the Presidency, Burdwan and Rajshahye divisions are not so blessed as to come under this description, but *four-fifths of Behar do*. •

We are aware that this is one of the fundamental propositions of these pages. We admit that the late rice was in 1873, in a certain degree, a failure; indeed, for the sake of argument, our admission has gone to what, we believe, is the unwarranted extent, that the failure was as great as in 1865. At the same time we assert that this alone does not constitute a sufficient cause for famine, and must be accompanied by the loss of

the bhadooee (autumn) and rubbee (spring) crops as well. We further assert that, judging from the experiences of 1866, failure of all three is impossible, and that the mortality in that year was caused by the export of the bhadooee and rubbee crops from Chumparun and Tirhoot, and in Sarun by the partial destruction of the rubbee in consequence of an exceptional visitation, a hail-storm of phenomenal extent and severity. To prove these points we rely mostly on the report by Mr. Cockerell, the now Commissioner of Rajshahye, and the answers by a number of official and non-official gentlemen to the admirable questions circulated by him in 1867. One of these questions was "What are the several crops which supply food for the people, and in what months are they respectively sown and gathered? In what proportions are the cultivated lands applied to the production of those crops respectively?" The following is a summary of the answers to it.

In Chumparun, Mr. Gibbon, a leading managing planter, and now the manager of the great estate of the Maharajah of Bettia, wrote—"Chumparun, properly speaking, is not a rice-producing district, its inhabitants being chiefly dependant on their autumn, spring, and poppy crops for their support." Mr. Cockerell himself reported—"Indian corn, or maize, which is, the main

crop of the district, had been almost entirely exported."

In Sarun, Mr. Cockerell reported. "The chief food-supplying produce of the district is Indian corn or maize, and different sorts of rubbee or spring crops, such as wheat, barley, peas, and small grain; rice is grown only on the low lands." Mr. Lewis Cosserat, manager of Burhoga Factory, wrote, "one-fourth is *bonâ fide* rice land." "The autumn, followed by various cold weather crops, are sown in the same land. The autumn crops consist principally of Indian corn or 'mukky' sown in the *best* lands, whilst the second quality of land is generally laid down in small grains, such as samma, murwah, kodoo, janera, and an early sort of rice." The manager of the Hutwa Raj wrote. "The crops are autumn, winter, and spring; the first produces mukky, murooa, kodoo, sawan, tungnee rice, ooreed, soothnee, kund, and chenna; the second provides a rice and a chenna crop. The third is productive of all geahoon, muttur, gram, urhur, murooa, khessaree, kirao, sugar-cane, and chenna: these are all edible articles for the people as well as for cattle with some exceptions. The proportions are autumn and spring two-thirds and winter one-third." Rice is in Sarun less than one-third of the edible crops, and failed only one-half in 1873. In 1874, the people of all classes had five-sixths

of their ordinary food and the lower classes a full supply.

In North Bhaugulpore Mr. Duff, of the Rajpore Factory, reported that "nine-sixteenths of the cultivated land are taken up by rice (winter and autumn) and the remaining seven-sixteenths by other crops." This estimate was supported in 1873 by the Collector of Bhaugulpore, who added "murwa," which elsewhere he calculates as covering six-sixteenths of the whole cultivated area, "has this year been a very fair year, and an eleven-sixteenths crop has been reaped." In 1865, the subdivisional officer of Mudehpoorah reported: "this crop (murwa) upon which the poorer classes, it may be said, depend almost entirely for their food, was nearly a total failure." The failure of the murwa and not of the rice had been the cause of distress in 1865.

Tirhoot lies between the foregoing districts, and, like them, produces maize and murwa to a greater extent than rice. In the south a native landowner reported to Mr. Cockerell that the cultivation of these crops was "extraordinarily" large. In the north the manager of the Durbhanga Raj wrote that in the tracts which produced rice chiefly, and they were only five out of fifty-three pergunnahs, and measured only five square miles, "75,000 beeghas," the rice was only four-sevenths of the total cultivated area. In the three-sevenths there

were grown "shama and konnee, gathered in July, marooah, mukky, ous rice and goomree, gathered in August; ooreed and meth, gathered in September, October and November; barley, wheat, gram, moosoor, and kessaree, gathered in February and March; urhur in April, and moog in June." All these crops could be largely increased in case of the failure of the winter rice. The result of the above facts is that the so-called rice tracts of Behar are confined to parts of Tirhoot and Bhau-gulpore and are of very limited area.

We have, however, a much stronger reason for believing that rice is not the food of the lower classes, and it is supplied by the price lists for the different districts of Behar from 1861 to 1875, which are now before us. In nearly all these years, that is, except when there had been a wheat blight or floods had destroyed the Indian corn, *rice has been invariably, and at all seasons, the dearest food grain in the Behar markets.* As an example, we take the harvest year from September 1874 to September 1875 both because the rice, rubbee and autumn crops during that period were all good, and because every one can readily test our figures for himself from the late numbers of the *Calcutta Gazette*. Our argument proceeds on two assumptions, both of which, we believe, will be yielded to us without much difficulty. They are that the poor in Behar form the great mass of

the population, and that where food staples differ largely in price the cheaper sorts form the ordinary food of the poor. The following are the rates current in the month of September, 1875, and give the number of seers of 2 lbs. weight per rupee obtainable in the markets of each district:

Tirhoot,—Wheat 20, barley 36, best rice 10, common rice 16, murwah 35, Indian corn 30.

Chumparun,—Wheat 23, barley 34, best rice 8, common rice 16, murwah 34, Indian corn 31.

Sarun,—Wheat 21, barley 36, fine rice 9, common rice 21, murwah 36, Indian corn 32.

Bhaugulpore,—Wheat 19, barley 40, common rice 19, murwah 50, Indian corn 39.

Durbhunga,—Wheat 19, barley 28, common rice 17, murwah 27, Indian corn 32.

Patna,—Wheat 25, barley 35, fine rice 11, common rice 22, Indian corn 30.

Shahabad,—Wheat 20, barley 30, common rice 18, murwah 40, Indian corn 28.

. In September, 1873, just before the famine alarm was raised, the prices were in Tirhoot:—Barley 25, common rice 17, murwa 30, Indian corn, 22. In Chumparun: barley 31, common rice 21, Indian corn, 32. In Sarun: barley 23, common rice 16, murwa 30, Indian corn 32. In Bhaugulpore: barley 23, common rice 18, murwa 44. In the five rice pergunnahs in North Tirhoot, before mentioned, the prices were, in



December, 1874, after the rice harvest, according to the Durbhunga Manager: rice 20, shama 35, konnee 16, marooah 35, mukky 26, ooreed 25, meth 30, koorthiee 26, barley 40, wheat 16, grain 22, mussoor 27, kerraon 24, kessaree 26, urhur 23, moog 24. We ourselves know that during the alleged famine good potatoes and yams were selling at from 2 to 4 seers for the anna, or from 4 to 8 lbs. for  $1\frac{1}{2}d$ . We could multiply instances to prove that rice is a luxury in Behar. Before we close this chapter we will give a specimen of the kind of estimates, even of the rice crop, which the sapient officials of Behar made of the crop in 1873. The Collector of Tirhoot wrote on the 15th January, 1874:—"The Madhobunnee officer thinks that there is not much over three and a half lacs of maunds in his sub-division. 'The harvest reaped lately,' he says, 'came to a lac, or thereabouts.' But if the out-turn of the rice crop, as he recently reported, was two to three-sixteenths, I do not understand how his estimate can by any possibility be so low as a lac. In letter No. 30, dated 22nd February, 1868, from Commissioner of Patna to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, the out-turn of rice per beegah of ordinary land, with other particulars, is given for each district in this division. In the case of Tirhoot, the average produce is stated to be fourteen maunds, but the yield in the Madhobunnee sub-

division is entered as twenty maunds per beegah, and the maximum out-turn as twenty-five and thirty maunds. The area of land under rice in Madho-bunnee sub-division has not been reported ; but assuming it to be only one-half of all the cultivated land, and consequently not more than 300,000 acres, and the yield to be twenty maunds per acre in ordinary years, I think a two-sixteenth crop must give at least 750,000 maunds of grain."

## CHAPTER III.

THE COLD WEATHER OR RUBBEE CROPS OF BEHAR  
IN 1874.—ABUNDANCE.

We have already observed the first-class importance of these crops, forming as they do large part of the food grains of all classes of Beharees of that province.

Our treatment of this subject is in no way original. Any reader of the famine reports could do as much. We merely quote the opinions of the district officers and their principal subordinates. We attempt no minute writing, and avoid all strong adjectives of our own.

On the 15th January it was reported from South Tirhoot that “in the Hajeepore subdivision rubbee still looks good except in particular places; in the Tajpore subdivision prospects are less favourable than they were a fortnight ago, and it is reported that the most promising food crop of the subdivision, rahar, which was expected to be in places sixteen annas, and generally ten to twelve annas, has been somewhat injured by two nights’ hoar frost during the past week.”

It is to be remembered that according to the

definition of the Bengal Government, a sixteen anna crop is a remarkably abundant—a bumper crop; and that a twelve anna crop is an average crop. The injury from frost could not be very great as rahar grows and bears on the side of the Himalayas. In Seetamarhee, which was in quite as bad a condition as Durbhunga or Madhoo-bunnee according to direct evidence of every one, Sir George Campbell, Sir Richard Temple, the Commissioner of Patna, and the Collector of Tirhoot, we are informed on the 7th March, “wheat, barley, grain, mussoor, and kalsi are reported to be doing well; rahar, it is said, will yield twelve anna out-turn;” and this is the sub Terai tract of famine-stricken Tirhoot. Towards the end of the month, even in Durbhunga, rahar is discovered to be “good.” In Tajpore the rubbee crops are declared in the pergunnah of Suressa to be bad, still they are expected to supply food for the people for two months. In Hajeepore, rubbee is yielding “a very fair out-turn.” What makes these admissions the more noticeable is that Tirhoot was the Bedlam of the faminists.

Let us now see what steady and senior collectors had to say in the matter. In Monghyr we hear that in the opinion of the collector, Mr. Lockwood, “the rubbee crops are looking very well, considering the dry season we have had. On Saturday I rode from Luckiseraï to Monghyr, thirty miles, and I calculate that I looked over at

least 70,000 acres. With the exception of some 8000 acres on the south side of the road between Luckiserai and Allinuggur, the whole of this large number is under rubbee. The crops on the north side of the road, far as the eye can reach, particularly near Allinuggur and Surajurra, *are very good indeed*, and the ryots even acknowledged them to be *everything that could be desired*. A very large area is under peas, nearly five feet high, and covered with flowers; in fact, *I have never, even in England, seen finer crops*. It is also a cause for satisfaction that here the non-edible crops, linseed and mustard, bear quite an insignificant proportion to the other crops, wheat, barley, peas, gram, &c., used for food." The average out-turn of wheat, which is largely cultivated in Monghyr, is from twenty to thirty maunds an acre, and of pulses and peas about the same. So that from the one tract seen on this Saturday morning by Mr. Lockwood, at least 1,200,000 maunds of the ordinary food of the people was obtained. In the most backward part of Sarun, the sub-divisional officer of Sewan reported: "I have nothing to add to my last report regarding the rice crop. As regards the rubbee crops, I am glad to be able to say that, taking the sub-division as a whole, they are in a very fair condition." On the 4th April, the Collector of Chumparun, one of the blackest tracts, reported: "the barley, wheat, and dal (pulses) crops have been harvested, and are certainly not

less than eight annas (one-half of an average season)," and the Collector of Champarun was the greatest faminist amongst the senior officers. In Gya, about the same time, 24th January, the collector writes: "The rubbee is in very good case. Whatever has been sown is doing well, and if we are blessed with rain there is no reason why we should not have a full crop. Peas, mustard, sugarcane, urhur, wheat, and barley are particularly good. All my sub-divisional officers report the rubbee as giving no cause for anxiety at present, but a full out-turn will depend entirely on whether or no we have rain, and the satisfactory condition of the rubbee is a matter of further congratulation, inasmuch as it is on the husks of the rubbee grains that the cattle chiefly depend for sustenance. It is a curious fact that I have never known the cattle of this district to be in such good case as they are at present." The crops were blessed with abundant rain a week after. In Shahabad, "the rubbee is said to be looking well. In the Sasseeeram sub-division the rahar, mussoor, peas, and kerao, a kind of wheat; are reported to have suffered to a slight extent. It is said that nearly half of the crops in certain villages in the thannah jurisdiction of Bhubooa have been destroyed by frost, but the special deputy collector reports that he had just come through the country between the Grand Trunk Road and Chand, and only one-fourth of a beegah (the twelfth of an acre)

of kerao was pointed out to him which was frost-bitten. In the Buxar sub-division, a good part of which I have been over during the past fortnight, the rubbee on the whole is looking well." From Sarun, on the 11th February, it is reported that "the rubbee crops in general in this tract are very good and excellent. Large tracts of land are seen covered with good barley and wheat crops." In Patna, the collector, Mr. Mangles, reported on the 8th March, "The harvesting of the rubbee crops of almost every description is now being generally carried on throughout the district, and will afford labour to the poorer classes for another month or three weeks. In writing under this head the sub-divisional officer of Barrh reports, 'yield everywhere has been good, and *the cultivators seem contented.*' In Behar the sub-divisional officer informs that the rubbee of every kind has yielded far better than was at first expected, and goes on to say, '*no one, not even the most covetous ryots, could wish for a better crop.*' In Dinagepore, Captain Playfair estimates the crop at from an eight to a twelve-anna one; but in this, from all that I have heard from the natives, I cannot help thinking that he is under the mark." It was in the face of these facts that the grain allotments were made which we have described.

The results were such as might be expected. From Sarun we hear that "the bazaars continue to be abundantly supplied with grain, both by impor-

tation from other districts, and by local supplies from the villages around the different markets. *The supply far exceeds the demand at present, and a great deal of the grain brought to the markets is often carried away again unsold.* The new pea crop, as I mentioned in my last report, is now in the market, and the other rubbee crops of wheat, barley, &c. the reaping of which has now commenced, will soon add to the supplies." A special relief officer imported from the North-Western Provinces to look for famine, is unsuccessful in his search, and writes : " I still fail to observe in my rides through the villages any signs of general distress or extreme scarcity of food. The people of the district are, as a rule, surly and churlish to the extreme, and if they were generally pushed for the means of sustenance this characteristic would certainly relax. The sight of a European, even when not known to be the Government officer on tour, would appear to them as a chance of relief ; and they would not, as now, let him pass unnoticed, refusing even to show the way through their villages, or direct him to his camp."

When the reaping time came round, the Collector of Patna more than confirms his previous estimate of plenty. "About half the rubbee crops are still on the ground, but they are now fast being reaped, and in the course of the next three or four weeks we may expect to see them all harvested, especially if the weather continues as favourable as



it is at present. My expectations regarding the out-turn of the crops have, I am glad to say, been fully realized, so much so, that the Deputy Collector of Behar, writing on this subject, says: 'No one has any reason to complain; without exception the unanimous testimony of the people is that the rubbee crop is one of the best they have ever seen.'” The following fact mentioned by the Collector of Monghyr, on the 21st March, gives some idea of the extent of the cold weather crops in this district: “The rubbee harvest is now general throughout the district. I calculate that 300,000 persons found employment in the poppy-fields, and at least 600,000 persons are engaged in cutting the crops.”

The total population of Monghyr is 1,800,000 souls. In Bhaugulpore, on the 24th March, the collector reported: “The rubbee crops are now being reaped, and the out-turn will be very good in pergunnah Chye; a bumper crop is almost certain; and over other parts of the district it is put down as six annas to twelve annas, but this, from what I have myself seen, is below the mark.” Even Sir Richard Temple had to confess with regard to this district that, “the collector (Mr. V. Taylor) assures me that in those parts of the district which lie south of the Ganges, and those which are situate on the basin of the river Kosee, there is no reason to fear any serious distress, and on the north bank of the Ganges the crops are excellent; indeed the excel-

lence of the prospects of the crops near the Ganges is beyond doubt."

In Purneah, where Mr. Shillingford the leading planter of the district estimated that "there has been a twelve-anna (average) bhadooee (autumn rice) gathered, and a ten-anna (ten-sixteenths) aughani (winter rice) expected," the collector reported in November, "If we get rain the yield of the 'rubbee' will be *enormous*. Owing to the failure of the rice every available beegah has been sown with mustard or pulses. In the north where wheat was scarcely ever grown before, I have seen the people sowing it, and have seen cart-loads upon cart-loads going up towards Kishengunge for seed. The kurthee and janera also *largely* sown look very well, especially the former. If this crop succeeds there will be no great scarcity of food, as the mahajuns (merchants) who have rice stored will be induced to sell freely. There is in every village a considerable store of rice." In March, after abundant rain had fallen, he informed Government that "the rubbee prospects continue excellent." It is little wonder then that the people would not take the coarse rice from Burmah, when they had quite sufficient rice and wheat of their own. We can positively assert that the greater part of the Burmah rice in Purneah was sold at 80 seers to a rupee to two merchants, when the price of country rice in the local markets was 18 seers for the rupee.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE GRAIN ALLOTMENTS.—WANT OF INTELLIGIBLE PRINCIPLE.—WASTE OF £4,271,750.

SUBSTANCE OF CHAPTER.—The purchase of Government grain cost £4,400,000. The amount purchased was 460,000 tons. In estimating that this quantity was required there was an utter absence of all attempt to following any principle of calculation. The estimates of the number of persons likely to be distressed were in all cases largely in excess of, often double, and sometimes quadruple the estimates, the “careful and elaborate” estimates, as Sir Richard Temple admits, of district officers. In his grain allotments Sir Richard Temple assumed diet rates and periods of probable scarcity condemned by Sir George Campbell, and not supported by a single officer of position in Bengal or Behar. Sir Richard Temple failed to give reliable information to the Supreme Government of the means he had taken to satisfy himself of the extent of the rice failure and consequent distress. The distress in the so-called “very distressed tracts” was not severe, and was entirely absent in the rest of the provinces. The majority of the later grain allotments were made solely to get rid of the rice that

the Behar people could not and would not consume.

RESULT.—Waste in Tirhoot alone 4,800,000 maunds of rice, worth £1,680,000. Waste throughout the whole of Behar and Bengal 12,065,000 maunds, or 435,000 tons, worth £4,271,750.

It is known that the grain allotments were made on no fixed principle. The process was generally the following. Sir Richard Temple visited a district, he rode through it, keeping to the roads, as hard as a horse every eight or ten miles could carry him. He had an evening's, perhaps a day's talk, with the collector and a few other officials. He vanished the next morning at the express pace he came, and at the next station wrote a minute. There were many such minutes during February and March, 1874, but these all share in a remarkable similarity. They are usually something in this style. "Having marched through the so and so district," and then go on to the old dismal story about "great expanses of desolation," "black tracts and blacker confines." Although, parenthetically and to avoid a too general condemnation, we will confess ourselves to be sincere admirers of such remarkable powers of continued equitation, we cannot admit that a sixty miles' morning ride can be fairly described as marching. Moreover, a view from a main road which usually runs, particularly in deltaic Bengal and Behar along the driest

ground that can be found, does not give a very favourable opportunity of judging of a marshy country said to be affected by drought. The minute then proceeds to say: "having consulted the collector, I think that so many persons will be in the gravest distress for so many months, and that so many maunds are required, or, to be safe, half as many more." We are always glad to have the thoughts of a public servant so distinguished as Sir Richard Temple, but we like facts better. We should have been anxious to know something about the consultation with the collector, on what grounds it was stated that so many persons were in danger of famine, why thirty per cent. of the population was nearly everywhere the lowest limit of the miserable, and why it was more often fifty per cent. We were never told, and had to be satisfied with Sir Richard's thoughts and opinions. It was not that he was without grounds on which his estimates might have been founded, especially in Behar. There had been a famine there only eight years previously. It had been studied with much care. There was an elaborate report extant on it. There were the reports of the Orissa Famine Commissioners and of Colonel Baird Smith on which to found his estimates. There were the mortality returns of Behar in 1866, yet no use was made of them. "I think," says Sir Richard Temple, "that in thannah so and so fifty per cent. of the population will come on our hands for seven months,"

and the thing is done, the rice is ordered and the money spent. We shall give several specimens of this unique *deus ex machina* style of doing things further on in this chapter.

We feel it presumption to discuss points which Sir Richard Temple left untouched, yet we venture to suggest a means of judging the probable amount of relief necessary derived from the experiences of 1866. We know the number of persons who died from starvation during each of the months of that year. Where one person died it is reasonable to suppose many were distressed—gravely distressed—on the verge of famine, and in fact, in the most urgent want of assistance. Would there be ten such distressed persons for every one who died? Certainly. If relief were to be given this would be perhaps a high enough estimate to *begin* to work on. Such at least is the answer we think most cautious men would make. We, however, can afford to be more liberal. Suppose then, when it was believed honestly, no doubt, but groundlessly and unreasoningly, that the failure of crops in 1873 was as great as in 1865, that Government had laid it down as a policy at the very beginning, that it would make arrangements *to relieve twenty persons in 1874 for every person who had died of want in 1866*, would any one dare to declare it a niggard policy? If to this was added a somewhat increased grant for district roads and public works its benevolence would have been complete. Such

a mode of estimating relief, it is true, would apply in its entirety only to Behar, as it is only for Behar that we have mortality statistics. It would be hopeless to search for them, or attempt to compile them for Eastern and Northern Bengal for the simplest of reasons. In 1866 there were no starvation deaths in any of the districts situated in any part of that province except in those bordering on Orissa, and it may therefore be answered that in 1874 there was nothing on which an estimate like ours could be formed. It does not appear so to us. Prices were in 1866 as high in these tracts as in most Behar districts, yet there was no mortality. Under these circumstances the absence of mortality seems to us to prove *that they were much better able to bear the strain resulting from a scarcity of food.* If then relief measures were at all necessary in Bengal in 1874, the extreme per centage of the population likely to need relief might be taken as half the average per centage of the Behar districts obtained in the manner described above.

We do not say that this was the only way in which Sir Richard Temple might have met the question of grain allotments. We might suggest half a dozen others derived from the reports and returns before him, which he was bound to use and which he failed to avail himself of. We have not the space to do so. We have given the first that occurred to us, and can at least claim that it is more consonant with reason, science and expé-

rience than the random haphazard, *want of rational principle* manner in which the Famine calculations were made, and the Famine relief lavished over the land.

Having made the statements we have in the last few pages, we fully feel—none can feel more thoroughly—our responsibility for them, and the imperative necessity of our proving them to the uttermost letter. We take the grain allotments in order of the districts, as visited by Sir Richard Temple.

TIRHOOT. — With a population of 4,384,706 souls. In 1866 the first relief house was opened on the 4th June. In the last famine relief began in November 1873 instead of June 1874, and this although the harvests of 1873 were better than those of 1865, and the harvests of 1872 had been very full, while those of 1864 were nearly as short as those of 1865. The want of stocks from a previous good year might have rendered relief necessary very early in 1866, but such was not found to be the case. At the same time, we think relief should have begun in March 1866, as there were some deaths from starvation in the following month of April. We further think that the amount of relief given was quite insufficient, the highest number relieved being 11,621 in August. The total number of deaths from starvation in each of the months of 1866 were, April, 1617; May, 3058; June, 3437; July, 4283; August,



5846; September, 4443; October, 1615; and November, 638: total 24,937. There was besides an epidemic of cholera which caused an even larger mortality, but as such visitations are common in ordinary years it seems unreasonable to put it down to the account of famine. Although we believe we have proved in the foregoing pages that the drought was very much greater in 1865 than in 1875, and that the failure of all crops was far less in the latter than in the former year, still in this chapter we assume that in both these respects they were equally unfortunate. We shall first give the measures which Sir Richard Temple thought necessary, and then institute a few simple comparisons. On the 31st January, 1874, he wrote from Durbhanga. "The estimates of local officers give about one million as the number of souls who will come on our hands in the Tirhoot District, out of a total population of upwards of four millions, or 25 per cent.; and this is the district most severely affected in the whole Behar Province." On what principles of reason or unreason these figures were obtained were never stated. They probably never will be known. Sir George Campbell, however, found it necessary to make a very evident correction in this short paragraph when writing to the Government of India. We quote the passage but take exception to the exaggeration with which it begins. "The tract in Tirhoot which chiefly depends on rice (!?), and

where the failure has been most excessive, is not the whole, but speaking roughly, about half the district. In this view the estimate of a million people on our hands assumes nearer 50 per cent. than 25 per cent. of the population of the most distressed tract — a very liberal estimate." Sir Richard Temple is next pleased to give his opinions about the allotment, without, as usual, affording a symptom of reason for his coming to them. "Looking at all the statements together, I consider that it will not be safe to provide carriage for less than four millions of maunds of food-grain or 148,200 tons, which gives a margin over and above the collector's estimate. The worst two months will be May and June, though the month preceding that period (April) may be bad; and the three months subsequent (July, August, and September,) will almost certainly be so." Has any one ever "considered" what this really means? *It means that at the exorbitant rate of three-quarters of a seer a day to each person, women and infants included, one million of people were to be entirely supported for 213 days, or more than seven months.*

The above extracts are from Sir Richard Temple's first minute, and the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir George Campbell, seems to have thought he had a right to comment on it, and in forwarding it to the Government of India appended a very interesting note, the sum total of which was that he thought his deputy, Sir Richard, was very nearly off

his head, and was asking for nearly three times as much as was wanted. We will see the force of his representations and the snub he got for his pains. He never wrote a second note, and Sir Richard Temple had his way unchecked, even uncriticized.

“Accepting,” says Sir George Campbell, “the estimate of the number to be supported, I still cannot but think that the supply of food for them is estimated too liberally. Sir Richard Temple says  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions maunds tallies with the estimate of one million people. To be safe he says four millions of maunds. This implies a provision of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 maunds per head. Now, we have estimated the food required for the whole support of an adult male to be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a seer or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. per diem, viz.: 1 lb. of rice or wheat and  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of pulse, vegetable, fish, &c. The failure has been chiefly a rice failure, the pulses are good. The present rain will allow some quick-growing grains and vegetables to be sown. Fish, milk, &c., are still in the country. Many classes habitually eat meat, even in the shape of dead bullocks, mice, &c. If Government supplies 1 lb. per head of rice or other grain, I think the people may find the remaining quantity of food necessary to subsistence; and the above estimate is for an adult male, and if we extend it to the whole population—men, women, children, and infants—it becomes very liberal. We have been inclined to think that if, infants and all included, we supply a maund of 82 lbs. for ninety days, or

three months, that eked out in other ways will probably suffice. Certainly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  maunds or 123 lbs. for four months would be very ample provision.

“As regards the time for which provision must be made, it must be remembered that it is not till comparatively late in the season that the largest numbers come on our hands; then, if the people survive the worst months before the rains without being too entirely reduced, they gradually withdraw to cultivation. Tirhoot is a moist district; if the present genial fall moistens the ground well, and augurs the early rain-supply, which very frequently follows a bad year, a good deal may be grown even in the hot months, and what is called the *bhadoi*, i. e., the fast-growing maize, *murwa*, &c., come in, in August. I have been inclined to think a four months' supply for the distressed population about a fair estimate, especially if we have some further reserve for the rains; that four months' supply would be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions maunds.” Sir George Campbell and his officers were politely told by the Government of India that they had “long neglected to fully appreciate the requirements of those parts of the country,” and that “Sir Richard Temple had exercised a wise discretion.” Responsible and experienced rulers of sixty millions of people do not often get sat on in that style. As we have said, Sir George Campbell was guilty of no further timely advice. ॐ

\* When we state that the enormous quantity of

four millions *was afterwards increased to five millions*, that at the same time that hundreds of thousands of rupees, yes, hundreds of thousands of pounds were paid away *in cash* to labourers on relief roads, that the zemindars made every allowance to their ryots, and had relief works of their own, we can understand that famine relief in Tirhoot was described as excessive feeding and excessive pay.

We will now see what was the amount necessary on the supposition that the Government, acting with a reasonable caution, had determined to make arrangements for the charitable relief of twenty persons in 1874, for one who had died in 1866; besides, as we have before said, making a grant for a few roads through the most distressed parts, say a lakh of rupees, £10,000. The allowance of food we would give is half a seer, not only because we agree with Sir George Campbell's argument, but because it was the highest rate given in any part of Behar in 1866, and in that year the condition of the people who were relieved was good. It was the narrowness of relief, and not the short quantity that each relieved person got, that caused the mortality. Women and children, moreover, are those who come most on charitable relief. On this principle 187,027, maunds of grain should have been stored. The liberal nature of even our estimates may be judged from the fact that the grain allotment we advocate would have been

sufficient to feed 32,340 persons in April; 61,160, in May; 68,740, in June; 85,660, in July; 116,920, in August; 88,860, in September; 32,300, in October; and 12,760, in November, and, the work grant would have further supported 10,000 more for four months at five pice a-day, a rate which was found not only sufficient, but attractive in the neighbouring districts of the North-Western Provinces.

The conclusion is, that the grain allotment, even according to Sir George Campbell, was 3,500,000 maunds, worth £1,225,000, in excess of requirements, and when it was unreasoningly assumed that 50 per cent. of the population would need relief. *We declare the grain allotment of Tirhoot to have been 4,800,000 maunds, worth £1,680,000, in excess.* With Sir Richard Temple, we calculate that the cost price of each maund of rice, exclusive of transport, to have been  $3\frac{1}{2}$  rupees or 7 shillings.

In 1866, £3,743 was expended on gratuitous relief, yet on this amount 6768 persons were relieved in July; 11,621 in August; and 6876 in September. The expenditure on relief works was £201.

Taking the amount of relief given in 1866, instead of the numbers of deaths in that year as the index to the measures requisite in 1874, and assuming that the relief in 1874 were to be twenty times as great as in 1866, we find that £74,860 should have been expended on gratuitous relief,

which money would purchase 213,900 maunds of grain at seven shillings a maund. The relief-works grant would have been £4000. We however prefer the estimate founded on the number of deaths as it indicates the periods at which distress is most severe.

Relief measures four hundred times as great as those of 1866, could alone satisfy Sir Richard Temple.

CHUMPARUN, with a population of 1,440,815 souls. In order to save ourselves against the possibility of the charge of making our man of straw and then killing him, we will show that this district was really one of the most distressed in Behar. On the 31st December Sir George Campbell classed it with North Tirhoot and North Bhaugulpore as being a tract "where distress is likely to be worst, and to which the routes of access are least easy." On the 15th January he declared that in Chumparun "less than one-third of the out-turn of an ordinary year had been obtained from the crops of 1873." Sir Richard Temple's description is the "brown deepening into red," passage quoted before. In 1866 the first relief house was opened about the 7th June. The deaths month by month were: in April, 931; in May, 911; in June, 1307; in July, 6922; in August, 3752; in September, 7069; in October, 8,939; in November, 1977; total, 31,808.

In 1874 Sir Richard Temple estimated that

316,000 persons would need relief in the district, and then goes on to "anticipate" that of this number there was to be expected "one-fourth in February, one-half in March, three-fourths in April, the full number in May, the full number in June, the full number in July, three-fourths in August, and one-fourth in September, or on an average per diem 217,000 persons for eight months, at three-fourths of a seer per head, requiring 4068 maunds a day (about), or 976,320 maunds in all." "On the whole, I consider that 1,000,000 of maunds of Government grain must be imported into this district by the 15th June." As usual in the minute in which these figures are laid down so absolutely, there is not the smallest attempt to explain the reasons of their adoption.

According to Sir George Campbell's estimate of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  maunds for each individual for four months, we know that his allotment for Chumparun could not have exceeded 474,000 maunds, even if he accepted Sir Richard Temple's calculation of the number likely to be distressed, which is improbable.

Our estimate of relief founded on the same principle as in the case of Tirhoot, and which has been already fully explained, gives 280,200 maunds. The fact that Sir George Campbell's estimate is not double ours quite satisfies us that our allowance, although perhaps excessive, is at



least liberal. It supposes the gratuitous relief of 18,620 persons in April; 18,220 in May; 26,140 in June; 138,440 in July; 75,040 in August; 144,380 in September; 178,780 in October; and 39,540 in November. If we do not mistake, the allotment to this district of one million of maunds was afterwards largely increased.

The great distress was to commence about the beginning of May, according to Sir Richard Temple; yet on the 4th of that month, when only 26,162 maunds had been used, one of the principal relief officers, Mr. Howe, stated that "it is now quite exceptional to meet a person with that painful famine-stricken appearance which then (early in January) was everywhere but too common." The distress was at an end before Sir Richard Temple anticipated it would begin. The rice, however, was got rid of—thrown to any one who would take an advance, Government prices coming down wonderfully to suit the convenience of grain merchants eager to traffic in it. *The waste in Chumparun was at least 700,000 maunds, worth £245,000.*

In 1866, £1298 was expended on gratuitous relief, yet on this amount 4160 persons were relieved in July; 3746 in August; and 3099 in September. The expenditure on relief works was £1147.

SARUN, with a population of 2,063,860 souls, lies on the north bank of the Ganges, and is

traversed through its whole length by the navigable river Gunduck. On both these rivers are numerous centres of commerce, in which a larger grain trade is carried on than in those of any other districts of Behar. The soil is of peculiar fertility, and the rubbee crops, of wheat especially, are largely exported. We have before noticed that, like Chumparun, it is but a small producer of rice. In 1866 distress was felt very early in the year, but was confined to a small area and a small section of the population, and the mortality was low. The deaths were in January, 165; in February, 162; in March, 204; in April, 439; in May, 552; in June, 685; in July, 827; in August, 759; in September, 372; in October, 98; in November, 73; and in December, 9; total, 4345. Mr. Cockerell assigns the following very abundant reasons for the partial famine. "The distress in the Sarun district was at first general, from the effects of *two or three* bad harvests in successive years, and the general increase in the price of all kinds of food with no proportionate rise in the wages of labour, and was subsequently locally intensified by the *complete* destruction of crops caused by the severe hailstorm which traversed a portion of the district from west to east in February, 1866. The autumn crops of 1864 partially failed, and the ensuing rubbee, or spring crops, sustained very great injury from a hailstorm which passed over exactly the same tract of country as that devastated by the

more severe storm above alluded to. From these causes the stock of grain throughout this portion of the district, embracing an area of between 200 and 300 square miles, had received no fresh supply from local produce, and distress began to be felt at an early period."

*In 1874 none of these causes existed.* The harvest of many previous years had been good; the autumn harvests were good; the rubbee crops were "very good and excellent." The rainfall, normally 38 inches, was, in 1873, 34 inches; in fact, only half the small rice crop failed.

Let us repeat Mr. Cockerell's account of the food supply. He wrote in 1867: "The chief food-supplying produce of the district is Indian corn or maize, and different sorts of rubbee or spring crops, such as wheat, barley, peas, and small grain; rice is grown only on the low lands." It was in spite of these facts that Sir Richard Temple could persuade himself to assert that in this district 280,000 persons would require relief—for what reason under heaven no human being shall ever conceive. To feed them, nothing less than 680,000 maunds of rice were to be imported. Sir George Campbell would give them 420,000. Yet even this is an utterly wild estimate. We should have arranged to feed 3300 persons in January; 3240 in February; 4040 in March; 8780 in April; 11,040 in May; 13,700 in June; 17,540 in July; 15,180 in August; 7440 in September; 1960 in

October; 1460 in November; and 180 in December; and 32,947, or at most 40,000, maunds would have done it. *Waste in Sarun, 640,000 maunds, worth £224,000.* This would have been purely a measure of precaution, and probably an unnecessary one.

In 1866, £2171 was expended in gratuitous relief, yet on this amount 5062 persons were relieved in July, and 4158 in August. The expenditure on relief works was £2360.

BHAUGULPORE, with a population of 1,826,290 souls, presents probably as good an example of the beneficent influence of Sir Richard Temple as any district we could choose. On the 19th February, 1874, Sir Richard Temple wrote the following minute at Soopole, in North Bhaugulpore, having completed no less than three other minutes on the 17th at Darbhunga in Tirhoot:—“Having visited the North of the Bhaugulpore district, which may be regarded as the distressed part, and conferred with the commissioner, the collector, the civil officers of the Soopole and Mudheypoora subdivisions, where the distress is most likely to occur; also with the officers of the court of wards in the Nareedigur pergunnah of the Soopole subdivision, and with those native gentlemen whom I have been able to meet, I have to record the following observations.” As he had only a day at the utmost to do all this, it may suffice to say that

the observations are of the usual type. Then follow the estimates. "The commissioner of the division has given me a careful and elaborate calculation. He has made this after consulting the collector and the subdivisional officers. The result is that he reckons on a possibility of 171,651 persons needing assistance for a period of five months; hence he deduces a requirement of 500,000 maunds at three-quarters per head per diem, to which he adds 100,000 maunds as a margin of security." This, however, did not satisfy Sir Richard Temple's ideas of safety. "My own opinion," he writes, "after the best consideration which I am able to give to the subject, is that some of the per centages assumed in Mr. Barlow's calculation may be exceeded actually in many parts of the tract, when the worst season of distress arrives." So we have a second array of all kinds of figures, from units to hundreds of thousands; and, *presto!* "all things considered"—none of which are stated—"a total number of 274,650 souls, which might need assistance for three and a half months from 1st June to 15th September, while half this number might need assistance for April and May, and one quarter of this number for March. This calculation, at three-quarters of a seer per head per diem, gives a total requirement of 733,732 maunds, or say seven and one-third lakhs of maunds," and all founded on a twenty-four hours' knowledge of

the country. After this there can hardly be much talk of Sir Richard Temple being misguided by the Behar officers. They were faminist enough in all conscience, but their exaggerated fears are not to be compared with the panic of their superior. Neither shall we insult Sir George Campbell by supposing that he would wantonly have exceeded the "careful and elaborate" estimates of the district officers: in fact, he would have given one and a half maunds to 171,651 persons, or in all 257,476 maunds. The whole number of deaths in Bhaugulpore during the year 1866 had been only 83, and these were asserted by resident non-official gentlemen to be amongst immigrants from Tirhoot.

We are really at a loss to say what would be a reasonable amount of relief to have calculated for at the beginning of 1874. None, we believe, would be the most nearly correct. But North Bhaugulpore is very like North Tirhoot, and we have suggested that 187,027 maunds should be stored when the officials estimated that the number of distressed would be one million persons. In Bhaugulpore the number of the latter was, we have seen, 171,651; therefore, by the rules of simple proportion, 35,000 maunds might have been stored somewhere in Soopole for the sake of security. If it were necessary to spend it, it would feed 24,000 persons for four months. We wonder, when Sir Richard Temple went in for his millions

of maunds and dozens of lakhs of maunds, had he any notion of what could be done with half a lakh. *Waste in Bhaugulpore*, 697,000 maunds, worth £243,950, out of 733,000 maunds worth £256,550. In other words, £12,600 *were possibly usefully and charitably spent*. In 1866, £828 was expended in gratuitous relief, and £458 on relief works.

PURNEAH, with a population of 1,714,795 souls. Having once disregarded not only a collector but a commissioner, Sir Richard Temple did not hesitate to disregard both in the case of Purneah. In doing so he was again justified by a very thorough knowledge of the district. On the 5th March he was in Bhaugulpore, on the south of the Ganges, and on the 7th he wrote his Purneah minute, in the first paragraph of which he assured the Viceroy that he had "visited those parts of the district where there had been the greatest failure of crops." He may have done so, as the region referred to was very limited; but we regret that we must consider him inaccurate, as the places where there had been some little failure did not lie on either side of the Purneah road over which he "marched" on the morning of the 6th. Sir Richard Temple was certainly progressing, at least in disregard for experienced opinion, and his figures also began to show a still greater tendency toward bloatedness. The distressed in Purneah were to be 891,507, according to the new prophet.

The next paragraph forms his own condemnation. "The collector (Mr. Kemble) has calculated the number at 130,000, of which 45,000 pertain to parts other than distressed tracts, leaving 85,000 for these tracts." "The collector's estimated number, 130,000, at three-quarters of a seer per head per diem, gives for four and a half months, the quantity of 328,000 maunds. The commissioner's estimated number, 150,000, gives a quantity of 380,000 maunds. In order to provide a margin for safety he has brought up the quantity to 500,000 maunds." As usual, Sir Richard Temple claps on an immense extra-estimate on the top of even the extreme estimate of local commissioners. "The number according to my estimate (240,000), gives a quantity of 607,000 maunds; to which it may suffice to add a small margin for safety, bringing the total up to 650,000, or six and a half lakhs of maunds." This specimen is crucial. By his own avowal, Sir Richard Temple takes on himself to add 270,000 maunds to the first estimate of the commissioner, and 150,000 to his extreme estimate. Are such proceedings to be described as administration? However, Purneah is backward, and there might have been a little distress, which it might have been charity to relieve. We should therefore have perhaps allotted 50,000 maunds to the district. It might be wanted by the Nepaulese, and in any case it could be sold without any very excessive loss.



*Waste in Purneah* 600,000 maunds, valued at £210,000. Let it be observed that the collector's estimate of 85,000 persons, at Sir George Campbell's rate of one and a half maunds for the period of distress, gives only 122,500 maunds.

In 1866, £17 only had been expended on relief works. There was no gratuitous relief whatever afforded.

DINAGEPORE, with a population of 1,501,924 souls. We have always heard that Tirhoot and Chumparun were the blackest of the black tracts, and when it was proposed to relieve fifty per cent. of their population, even Sir George Campbell called it a "very liberal estimate." There were, however, still greater heights to which Sir Richard Temple was to soar. It must be allowed he was unfortunate in the choice of his district. Nothing but the ignorance of Sir Richard Temple could have chosen wealthy, rice-exporting Dinagepore, in which there had not been a failure of half the crop, as the place to assume sixty per cent. as the number of the starving. Sir Richard Temple at last outdid himself.

The rain in the months of August and September, 1865, was seventeen inches; in 1873 it was sixteen inches. In neither year was there any in October. There was not a single starvation death in 1866, and no relief was attempted or found necessary. There could have been no distress in 1874. Sir Richard Temple allotted 1,200,000

maunds of rice. When it came the lower classes would not take it—they had abundance of their own; but they were quite willing in the slack season before the rains, when little work can be done in the rice fields, to flock to the relief works, where they were liberally paid *in cash* for doing nothing. At the beginning of June, just before the rains began, only 50,000 maunds of rice had been consumed, and more than £100,000 had been paid away in cash. What became of the rice? It was advanced—that is the word—at one-third of its price in the local markets to any one who would take it, and very rarely to the poor. It was sold to the Nattore merchants, who carried it to Calcutta, mixed it with an equal quantity of country rice, and disposed of it at bazaar rates, making extravagant profits.

If only one-tenth part of the enormous amount of money squandered on public works had been spent, we should still not hesitate to declare every grain of rice imported by Government into Dinagepore to have been totally unnecessary. *Waste in Dinagepore 1,200,000 maunds, worth £420,000.*

BOGRA, with a population of 689,467 souls. For once Sir Richard Temple met his match in marvellous estimates,—a man, whom he could admire, but could not rival. The Europeans of India could not produce a second Temple. The new Falstaff who could see ten where ordinary people could perceive one or none, was a well-

informed native gentleman, "who has long experience of the district, and is highly recommended to me as a valuable witness." This paragon of value and valuations asks for 728,790 maunds!! The relief commissioner was of a different opinion. "Mr. Robinson thinks that the per centages of persons who may need assistance, as taken in the baboo's estimate, are too high." They were in some cases 75 per cent. "His recommendation is, that Government should provide 160,000 maunds." Then comes the *deus ex machina*. "*I consider, having regard to all circumstances, that the 240,000 maunds ought to be provided for this district.*" There seems however to have been in Bogra a single officer who kept his head, and he *the executive chief of the district*. "The collector, Mr. Kelly, would admit the value of the baboo's opinion; but looking to all the circumstances of the district—to its facilities for communication, to its prosperity in ordinary years, and to its probable means of bearing up against scarcity—he seemed to be *strongly of opinion* that the 50,000 maunds already provided by Government would suffice." Even this representation is not correct. Mr. Kelly wished to store 50,000, in case it might be needed. He never said he thought it would be. We have seen how a collector could be treated in Bhau-gulpore for contradiction. In Bogra a special relief wakiah also appeared. But Mr. Kelly had not completed the measure of his sins. In July,

when nearly all the rice was still in hand, and no one would have it, he failed to devise means to get rid of it satisfactorily. He was actually superseded, and the merchants made another haul as his successor sold the grain freely at 30 seers to the rupee, and afterwards at 50 seers, and was highly complimented for his able management.

As Bogra is the most central of the Rajshahye districts, and lies on the great artery of communication in Eastern Bengal, the Brahmapootra, we have allowed that 40,000 maunds might have been stored in it to provide against untoward contingencies. *Waste in Bogra, 200,000 maunds, worth £70,000.*

Sir Richard Temple's minute commences with the following words: "Having visited the Bogra district and marched through some of the worst parts of it, I have to record the following observations." It was dated Dinagepore, March 16, 1874. The marching consisted of riding by the Rungpore high road from Rungpore to Bogra, 70 miles, on the 14th; and by the Dinagepore high road from Bogra to Dinagepore, 80 miles, on the 15th. Sultan Ilderim may be supposed to have "marched and visited" at some such pace as this, but such a rate of speed is hardly compatible with careful surveys and sober estimates. An Irish Chief Secretary once achieved a comical reputation from his boast that he had "made up" the whole island in a month on a jaunting car.

Yet what was the Hibernian celebrity to Bengal phenomena airily careering on their gold strewn way and scattering the hard wrung wealth of the Empire at every whisk of their horses' tails.

We have now gone through all the worst tracts, according to Sir George Campbell's statements and Sir Richard Temple's famine maps. Is it necessary to examine the allotments to the "less distressed" or scarcely distressed districts of Monghyr, Gya, Shahabad, Malda, Rungpore, Beerbhoom, Bankura, Burdwan, Moorshedabad, the Sonthal pergunnahs, Chota Nagpore, &c.? We will not weary our readers by needless repetition. The famine there was a greater, a more unpardonable sham; the famine relief even more utter waste.

It was found absolutely impossible to make North Behar and Bengal absorb it all. The people would not take, at the lowest price, a quantity of perishable food that they could not make use of. Other consumers had to be found.

In the seven worst districts we have estimated that a total allotment of 715,000 maunds or 25,000 tons would have been amply sufficient. The total amount of grain imported by Government was 12,880,000 maunds or 460,000 tons. **THE WASTE IN THE GRAIN ALLOTMENTS IN THE WHOLE OF BENGAL AND BEHAR WAS ACCORDINGLY 12,065,000 MAUNDS OR 435,000 TONS, WORTH £4,271,750.**

We admit a certain amount of distress in Tirhoot and Chumparun, yet we have shown that a

most thorough relief could have been effected in the case of the former by one-twenty-fifth part of the allotment of Sir Richard Temple. We can feel with those who are astounded at such conclusions. After reasoning out this whole chapter, after reading about 3000 pages of famine correspondence, after persuading ourselves of the absolute accuracy of every figure used, we still ask can this thing be; can error be so stupendous?

## CHAPTER V.

## THE LABOUR RATES OF BEHAR.—THE EXPENDITURE ON RELIEF WORKS.—WHOLESALE WASTE.

SUBSTANCE OF CHAPTER.—The amount expended on relief works, according to Sir Richard Temple's final famine minute of the 31st October, 1874, was £1,280,000. We declare this amount vastly too great, because the rates at which labourers were paid were excessive, that is, at least three times what they ought to have been. In other words, the expenditure under this head could not legitimately have exceeded £427,000. And further, according to the experience in the districts of the North-Western Provinces, situated in regard to short crops at best as badly as Sarun, Champarun and Tirhoot were, the number of labourers on relief works would have been at least three-fourths less than it was but for these excessive rates, or, in other words, that the expenditure on relief of this nature should not have exceeded £106,750.

RESULT.—Actual waste—how, we leave the public, or better, a Royal Commission, to decide—£853,000; probable waste £1,173,250.

Perhaps there is no part of the famine measures which are so hidden in obscurity as those called "relief works," at the same time that there are

none which the little that is known of them marks out for such severe, such absolute condemnation. When describing the condition of the Behar peasantry in the end of 1873, there was no point on which the advocates of famine so ceaselessly insisted, as their perennial poverty. How can people, they asked, who habitually earn only an anna and a half a day, contrive to tide over a period of grave distress? How can a family, the aggregate earnings of all whose members are rarely twice that amount, afford to purchase rice—it was always rice—when that grain costs four or five rupees a maund? Every one who knew Behar was ready with the answer “none will purchase rice when a dozen other good grains are in the market for a third of its price.” But this is not the point we wish to draw attention to here. It is that one and a half annas are and were known to be the ordinary wages of a labourer in Behar just before the famine, and that three annas was the average earning of such a labourer and his family together. There could indeed have been no ignorance. No later than July, 1873, within a few months of the famine alarm, the commissioner of the great Patna division, which includes the districts of Tirhoot, Sarun, Champaran, Patna, Gya, and Shahabad, returned to Government the labour-rates of Behar, rates which were afterwards specially published from the Bengal Secretariat. They were “for ordinary coolies,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  annas, or 7



Goruckpore pice per diem; for women, 1 anna, or 5 Goruckpore pice per diem; for boys, 1 anna, or 5 Goruckpore pice per diem; and for children  $8\frac{1}{2}$  pies, or 3 Goruckpore pice per diem." Even near the Soane Canal works, where there was an unusual demand for labour, the rate for coolies was only two annas a day, or three rupees twelve annas a month. Nor can this be considered a poor remuneration. Ordinary native domestic servants rarely get more than three rupees a month. Everywhere, except in Calcutta, and certainly in Behar, all our own inferior servants, grooms, messengers, sweepers, water-carriers, &c., never get more than five rupees, and often support large families on that amount. The common labourer cannot be very badly off, when he and his wife and children make three annas a day or five rupees ten annas a month. There is only one question more which we shall have to determine before we can consider the rates on the famine relief works, which, it will be remembered, consisted almost exclusively of the making of roads and the digging of tanks. The amount of work done in these employments is usually estimated by the number of hundred or thousand cubic feet cut and thrown in the case of a road, dressing and smoothing being separate items, or cut and removed in the case of a tank. In earth work labour a man and woman usually work together. The man plies his spade or pick and puts the earth he cuts into a small basket, which,

when full, the woman carries off on her head and discharges on the road or outside the tank. In the case of earth work paid as piece work, in estimating a man's and woman's earnings, it is necessary to see how much they can complete between them in a day. Unfortunately there is no authoritative statement on this point, and we shall have to work out a short sum in division before we arrive at it. In the same return that the Patna Commissioner gives  $2\frac{1}{2}$  annas as the average wages of a man and woman working together, he also reports that earth work is paid at the rate of one rupee four annas, or twenty annas per 1000 cubic feet. In order then to earn  $2\frac{1}{2}$  annas a day, the man and woman should cut the 1000 cubic feet in eight days, or, on an average, 125 feet in one day. We do not hesitate to say that they ordinarily cut 150 cubic feet a day.

We are now in a position to describe the rates that prevailed in 1874, and shall again refer to official papers. On the 25th May, 1874, Sir Richard Temple wrote from Monghyr the following words: "For the piece work the rates now allowed do undoubtedly appear more liberal for the skilled and the industrious, especially in Eastern Tirhoot, where the last rate is from five to six annas per 100 cubic feet of earth-work." "Being anxious that the State charity should be administered with as much thrift as is safely possible, I have authorized a reduction of the rates to five annas per

100 cubic feet, and in some cases to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  annas." He adds what every one might expect. "Numbers of persons and families are making more than subsistence. Some instances are narrated of the profits of individuals from piece work labour which may be exaggerated, but there are many authenticated instances of labourers, with the help of their wives and children, earning amounts daily either in kind or in cash, which prove a diligence and an energy which would hardly be believed were it not thus demonstrated. Others manage to earn by piece work, in a very few hours, enough for daily food." People who usually earned  $2\frac{1}{2}$  annas were making seven to nine annas a day, that is, *men and women whose ordinary daily wages was  $3\frac{1}{4}d.$  were earning  $10\frac{1}{2}d.$  to  $13\frac{1}{2}d.$  or  $1s. 1\frac{1}{2}d.$  a day*, or, to express it in the ordinary coin of the country, were earning from 35 to 45 Gorukhpore pice a day, five pice going to the anna. We do not declare that these rates were exorbitant. We certainly think so, but we shall leave it to a higher authority, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, Sir John Strachey, to accurately describe them. Before doing so, however, we must note some points that should be remembered. The districts of Gorukhpore, Ghazeepore, and Busti are as like Tirhoot and Chumparun as the latter are like North Bhaugulpore in soil, in products, and in population, and Gorukhpore and Chumparun are separated only by the river Gunduck. A second point is that Gorukh-

pore pice are as commonly in use in West Behar as in the east of the North-Western Provinces, and have about the same purchasing power. The famine minute of Sir John Strachey, a far less pretentious production than that of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, gives accurate information concerning the rates in his jurisdiction. "The rates at first paid in Gorukhpore and Busti were in Gorukhpore pice for a man six pice; for a woman four pice; for a child three pice; and for an infant three pice. About the middle of April the collector of Gorukhpore found it possible to reduce the wages of a man to five pice or one anna, and the allowance of non-labouring children to two pice. This change was ordered by Government to be introduced in Busti also. In the beginning of May the Ghazipore rates were reduced by the Lieutenant-Governor to four, three, and two pice, and on the 12th in Gorukhpore the allowance for infants was cut down to one pice, the rate which had already prevailed for some time in Busti. Towards the end of the month the Ghazipore rates were adopted in Busti, and the change, as has already been related, was followed by the speedy dispersion of the crowds assembled on relief works." The reasons of the reduced rates are shortly given. "Evidence was adduced that the scale had been too high, and that the relief works had attracted sellers not of necessities only but of luxuries."

The period from January to June is one of

comparative idleness in Indian agricultural districts, and particularly so in rice tracts. The result is, according to Sir John Strachey, that at this "slack season of the year the opening of Government relief works would always attract great crowds of labourers. In a season of considerable pressure, but not of absolute famine, the relief works in Gorukhpore and Busti were for some weeks daily thronged by more than 200,000 men, women, and children, who found an attraction in the light work, in the liberty of going at night to their houses *after attending a sort of vast picnic* during the day, and the wages earned at a time when ordinarily they had no employment in the fields, and had to live on their harvest savings. But when the wages were cut down to a mere subsistence allowance, when a full day's labour was insisted on, and when the liberty of living at their homes was threatened, these immense crowds melted away as rapidly as they had collected, and *it was found that there was hardly any one who stood in need of relief.*" In Gorukhpore in the last week of May, there were 89,000 labourers. The rates were reduced, and in a week they had fallen to 25,000. In Busti at the end of May, there were 127,000 on relief works. By the 22nd June, they had all disappeared. At the same time, on the other side of the Gunduck, in the districts of the Patna division, there were 1,122,828 men, women, and children on relief works. *When 10 to 12 pice*

*caused demoralization and a rush of labourers what was to be expected from 35 to 45 pice?* In the beginning of June the number went up to 1,231,496, later in the month to 1,368,087. Sir Richard Temple tell us, with tears in his eyes, that proud Rajpoots and weak Brahmin women were driven by want to the relief works. The wonder to us is, that many a needy European did not shoulder his shovel and pick and hie him to the Tirhoot Eldorado.

## CHAPTER VI.

## TRANSPORT.—WASTE OF £2,486,350.

This chapter, like the preceding ones, must be, we fear, nearly entirely condemnatory. There is, perhaps, one fact in connection with it, which although generally censured, we cannot absolutely condemn. Young military officers were, it is known, the principal officials in charge of the transport arrangements, and they were liberally rewarded for their labours. A few thousand rupees for once found their way into pockets where they were very much wanted. We never sufficiently appreciated the policy that sends out the English officer and gentleman to this country on an income that would not be offered to an engine driver or a municipal overseer, and we were glad to see the subalterns, and more senior officers also, getting even for one short year about enough to make up their pay to what it always ought to be. We may mention here that there were some points in the treatment of the military men in the famine not so satisfactory to us; as in Chumparun, where a full-blown colonel was assistant to an assistant magistrate. We are not at all sure that this injudicious arrangement had not a worse effect than might at

first appear. The latter gentleman certainly seems to have gone off his balance to a more than usual degree. He was a raging faminist, a favourite of Sir Richard Temple, and like his master had the accurate knowledge of Behar derived from having spent his whole service in another province—how many hundred miles off, we cannot definitely say.

The universal rate of transport in Behar *after* Sir Richard Temple's special appointment was three pics, or three-eighths of a penny per mauud of eighty pounds weight per mile. We have seen some of the contracts. An ordinary load in Behar for a cart drawn by two bullocks is ten maunds, and a day's journey with such a load is usually twelve to fifteen miles. Therefore, the lowest earning of each cart was one rupee fourteen annas, or 3s 9d a-day. We also know that in consequence of this high rate the carts were very heavily laden, and that they were pushed on quickly, and rarely did less than fifteen miles a day. We can say that two rupees, or 4s a day was the average rate of earning by each cartman employed in transport in Behar. We have no accurate figures for Eastern Bengal, but *we know* that the rates were at least as high as in Behar.

Unfortunately we cannot trace any official declaration of the ordinary rate of cart-hire in Behar. We know that it does not exceed eight annas, or one shilling a day, and if this contract extends to a month it is considered very liberal. It has how-



ever been officially reported that the ploughing of a beegha of land can scarcely be done by two oxen in a day, and that the ploughing of one beegha all over Behar is paid for by every one, indigo planters included, at the rate of four annas. Draught cattle therefore are well paid at the rate of eight annas a day. We can further declare that we have again and again seen this rate gladly accepted by cartmen, not only in Behar, but in Bengal, and we can appeal to most of our readers for similar experiences. Before Sir Richard Temple's appointment half a million of maunds were carried in Behar by Government officers, collectors, and subdivisional officers, at the rate of one pie per maund per mile, and these officials distinctly stated that they were paying high rates because they wished that the first grain supplies might arrive at their destination quickly, and to prevent overloading. After this it is hardly credible that Sir Richard Temple sanctioned contracts, not only at three, but at six pies per maund per mile, or four rupees a day per cart for a large quantity of the Tirhoot and Chumparun rice, which two districts received together nearly 6,000,000 maunds. *The rate paid all over Behar by Sir Richard Temple for the transport of grain was always four and often eight times as great as in ordinary years.*

The expenditure on transport was £1,760,000, according to Sir Richard Temple, of which about £500,000 was paid to the railway, leaving

£1,260,000 to be otherwise accounted for. Legitimately the transport beyond the railway could not have exceeded £315,000 if the whole exorbitant allotments had to be carried, that is, the whole transport could not have legitimately cost more than £815,000; but, as we have seen, one-twentieth part of the rice imported into Behar would have been sufficient, or the total cost should not have exceeded £40,750. *Waste on the transport of Government grain, £1,719,350.*

It is known that, not satisfied with his own vast grain arrangements, Sir Richard Temple assisted the private trade by paying half the freight in case the grain was sent by rail to the distressed tracts. The object of this was that it might be more quickly brought to where it was wanted. This measure has at least the appearance of honesty about it, but we regret to say it was also a very silly error. It did not bring *more* grain into Behar, because it did not cheapen carriage to the importer, and haste was unnecessary. Grain is ordinarily imported into Behar by boat, and this is found at least twice as cheap a mode of conveyance as that afforded by the railway. In 1873 the Commissioner of Patna reported that the boat freight of 100 maunds from Calcutta to Patna was 16 rupees, and at the same time the railway rate for edible grain was 25 pies per 100 maunds per mile. By rail Patna is 332 miles from Calcutta,

so that the cost of carriage of 100 maunds to Patna by railway was a little over 42 rupees. The hurry was quite uncalled for. The grain could have been brought by boat, in from a fortnight to a month, from Upper India or Lower Bengal, and even the most faminist officer represented that the food supply in Behar was sufficient to last to the beginning of March. *The waste under this head was £453,000.*

Besides making contracts for the carriage of all the rice he had allotted, Sir Richard Temple thought it necessary to have a special Government reserve transport train. If the first measure was disproportionately large, this second means of transport was entirely unnecessary. It consisted of eighteen steamers, twenty-two barges, four thousand river boats, eight hundred canoes, four thousand two hundred and fifty carts, ten thousand bullocks, eleven thousand pack animals, one thousand and eighty-six native officers, and forty-five European military officers. It cost £314,000. The steamers, the most costly item, came from England too late for use. They were ordered so late that it was impossible for them to arrive in time. Otherwise the train was collected in April and May *after* it had been distinctly seen that the contractors were able to keep their contract and carry all the rice allotted. Why it was ever called into existence we cannot pretend to explain, if not

to still further swell out the already overgrown business with which "Lord" Temple's name was to be for ever connected.

*Total waste on grain transport of all kinds*  
£2,486,350. ,

## CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.—A ROYAL COMMISSION ON FAMINES  
IN INDIA.

We have endeavoured in the foregoing pages to put as shortly as possible the facts connected with the famine of 1874. We have used nothing but official sources of information, reports, minutes, and figures, issued from the Bengal Secretariat, and we have found them all to lead irresistibly to the one conclusion—that the relief measures of that year were errors of the most egregious description.

We do not undertake, nor do we wish to be judges in the matter, but we demand that the whole famine question be most thoroughly gone into. Indian famines have been a continual cause of disgrace to successive administrations in this country. When they were only too real they were neglected, and when they did not and could not exist they were evolved from their own nothingness. It is certain that in both cases the Supreme and the Bengal Governments have been equally concerned, and we fear we cannot trust either of them to do much towards elucidating the topics involved. At the same time it is clear that no

Indian tribunal can sit in judgment on them, and if any impartial court of sufficient dignity is to be constituted, we must go to England for it.

It is true that the apathy of the English people and of the English Peers and Commons in matters of purely Indian interest is a subject of constant complaint, yet we hope, in this instance, they will not refuse to interfere and to break the long chain of disasters which, disguised under the name of visitations of Providence, have been really the results of bad government or ignorance, when they were not the outcome of a vain and ill-regulated ambition. Nor are the circumstances we criticize so exclusively Indian that the self-interest of large classes at home should not be aroused. Little of the waste, indeed, has been derived from English revenues, but English commerce will be burdened, for many a year to come, with taxes which the famine expenditure alone has rendered necessary. This, however, is not the view that England, as a governing country, can allow herself to take. The point she must consider is, whether she can claim to be fulfilling her duty towards this great empire by leaving its finances a prey even to ignorance. The people of India cannot help comparing the swift and severe punishment that descended on an instant's thoughtlessness, an instant's ill-judgment in the case of the "Vanguard," with the carelessness with which a loss to India fifty times as great has been disregarded.

We therefore call on all classes of society both in England and in India, on the members of both Houses, on the great non-official and commercial communities in the three Presidencies, and at home, on the still larger section of native opinion that has not yet learned to sacrifice its freedom of thought to a title or khillut; and, in fine, on all Englishmen to whom the good name of their mother country is still a matter of some moment, to join us in demanding a Royal Commission on famines in India.

In conclusion, we must crave our readers' forgiveness for many shortcomings. These pages have been written hurriedly, and bear, we fear, the signs of haste. We still hope that some allowance will be made for a pamphlet dedicated to the one object of advancing the truth.

There still remains one point more to which we must here advert, and it is, if possible, the least creditable of the many unworthy facts connected with the famine, a circumstance of broken faith and broken honour, that will bring a flush of anger and of shame to the brow of every Englishman in India. Our readers remember that in the beginning of February, 1874, a meeting was held in Calcutta "to consider in what way the public of India and England should be invited to help in relieving the distressed people of the drought-stricken districts." At that meeting it was laid down that in a time of famine Government could

not be expected to do more than supply labour to those able to work, while it was the holy duty of private charity to relieve the helpless and perennially poor. The one was to be the task of the State, the other was to be carried out simultaneously, but separately, by committees of non-official gentlemen in every part of Bengal. These committees were to be supplied with small grants of *money*, and were to expend them on the spot according to the special wants of each particular place. Sir Richard Temple tells us that —“The Government of India undertook to place at the disposal of the committee *public funds* equal to the amount of private subscriptions. The Central Committee communicated with the Lord Mayor of London, who had some weeks previously intimated his readiness to open subscriptions for a famine relief fund in England. The Lord Mayor held public meetings in London, at which a committee was nominated. Meetings were also held at different places in England and India. By the liberality shown, £282,669 in all were collected, of which £146,500 were contributed in Great Britain, and £131,319 in India.” “The total of the private subscriptions, together with the equal sum placed by Government at the disposal of the Central Committee amounted to £565,338.”

• In the final report on the famine we find the following items “of expenditure, charitable relief, £280,000; of receipts and recoveries, sale of grain



to relief committee, £270,000." Do our readers understand these figures? They imply that the "public funds" were never given, and that the money subscribed for charitable relief distribution was absorbed in paying for Government grain. English and Indian charity was prostituted to in some way make up the enormous waste of which the Famine authorities had been guilty, and it were strange if this could have been the case without the full knowledge of the Viceroyalty. It wanted but this final meanness to fill up the measure of the great contempt with which the public are turning away from the weak and shifty thing we now call Government, be it Supreme or be it Provincial, that bullies European gentlemen in Calcutta and wanders thirsting for adulation from Tipera to Bankipure, that substitutes chicane for diplomacy at Baroda, and goes crouching bare-headed and barefooted before the majesty of Burmah, that insults the memory of Mayo\* and decorates the Faminists.

\* We extract the following paragraph from the *Englishman* of the 26th November, 1875:

"Wednesday's issue of the *Calcutta Gazette* contains—such is fame—a notice from the Port Commissioners to the effect that the statue of the late Lord Mayo is removed from this place. The statue will be placed in the new building of the Port Commission. The inscription on the statue is: 'Lord Mayo, 1832-1872, Viceroy of India, 1869-1872, died 28th Feb. 1872, at sea, en route to England.' This was the first statue erected by Government."

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